

Weekly Column for December 7, 2006

The cold temperatures are here, and the Holiday Season is in full swing.

Sunday afternoon was an outstanding day in the City of Troy, as the 24th Annual Victorian Stroll brought record numbers of visitors to our historic downtown. Everywhere you looked there were people in shops, children on the streets, and families partaking in an assortment of holiday activities.

Organizers from the Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce estimate that more than 20,000 people visited downtown Troy on Sunday. That would make the 2006 Victorian Stroll that largest in history.

To me this is significant for several reasons. Foremost among them is that we have taken great strides in the previous three years to build up our downtown. We have an extraordinary amount of work still to accomplish, but the change is happening. New businesses continue to sprout up on an almost weekly basis. On Monday, we will have a ribbon cutting at Spill'n The Beans Coffee House, which is in the Market Block. Three years ago, the Market Block was completely empty. Now we have Market Block Books, Aurora's Willow Creek, The Living Room, the new Coffee House, and John Hedley has even moved his offices into the building.

Two weeks ago, I met some young graduates of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, who own a business called Agora Games. These young men were recently featured on the Capital Region section of the Times Union. They graduated from RPI, started a business in the incubator at the Tech Park, and have now moved to 359 Broadway, in the heart of downtown.

If our downtown is to become the vital marketplace that I think it can become, we need businesses and residents like Michael Delprete from Agora Games, or Michael Fiske from the Kismet Gallery, or people like Larry Schepici opening high quality restaurants like the Tosca Grille. But more than all of this we need people. And that is why projects such as The Conservatory, by Jeffrey and Deane Pfeil, and the Tavern Building and Trojan Hotel by Charlie Jewett are so very exciting. They are not only committing dollars to Troy, they are committing future residents to downtown.

Look around, it is happening. Before I wander on for too long, I want to reiterate something I mentioned a few weeks ago. If you have not finished your Christmas shopping, or better yet, if you haven't started, come to downtown Troy. Shop locally, you will be amazed at what you find.

Have a wonderful weekend.

Harry J Tutunjian
Mayor of Troy